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APRIL 5, 2004

DOCKET NO. 03-0801
REGULATORY ANALYSIS AND DEVELOPMENT
PPD, APHIS
STATION 3C71
4700 RIVER ROAD, NIT 118
RIVERDALE, MD 20737-1238

TO USDA:

THIS IS IN REGARDS TO THE REOPENING OF THE CANADIAN BORDER FOR THE ENTRY OF BISON.

FLYING H BUFFALO INC, CURT AND MARCIE HEPPER, OF RALEIGH, ND, OWN ONE OF THE LARGEST BUFFALO HERDS IN THE STATE. WE FEEL THAT THE CANADIAN BORDER ON BISON SHOULD STAY CLOSED. THE REASON BEING IS THAT BISON IN THE USA ARE SELLING FOR PRICES BELOW THE COST OF PRODUCTION. IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS RECORD NUMBERS OF PREGNANT BISON COWS HAVE BEEN SLAUGHTERED IN THE USA. IF THE BORDER OPENS THERE WILL BE A FLOOD OF BISON SLAUGHTER ANIMALS INTO THE USA. THIS WILL CAUSE THE BUFFALO COW MARKET TO TAKE A BIG DROP IN PRICE FORCING MORE AMERICAN PRODUCERS OUT OF BUSINESS. AS PRODUCERS AND FEEDERS WE WOULD LIKE TO STAY IN THE BISON BUSINESS. MANY USA BISON PRODUCERS ARE GOING BROKE OR ARE OUT OF BUSINESS.

THERE HAS BEEN A USDA BONUS BUY ON BISON MEAT OVER THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS. THIS WAS TO CORRECT THE OVER SUPPLY OF BISON IN THE US. IF THE CANADIAN BORDER OPENS WE WILL BE TAKING ON CANADA'S OVER SUPPLY PROBLEM.

WE FEEL THAT YOU WILL BE GETTING PRESSURE TO REOPEN THE BORDER FROM BISON "TRADERS" BECAUSE THEY HAVE ALREADY PURCHASED CHEAP BUFFALO ON THE CANADIAN SIDE AND ARE WAITING TO BRING THEM ACROSS TO MAKE HEALTHY PROFITS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE AMERICAN COW/CALF PRODUCER OR THE ROOT OF THE INDUSTRY.

AS AMERICAN PRODUCERS, WHO ARE WAITING FOR PRICES TO RISE ABOVE THE COST OF PRODUCTION, WE FEEL THAT OPENING THE CANADIAN BORDER TO BISON WOULD BE A VERY HEAVEY FINANCIAL BURDEN TO THE AMERICAN PRODUCER.

SINCERELY, *Curt Hepper*

RECEIVED

APR - 8 2004

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